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ABSTRACT

Many feature length films and films made for television are adaptable to classroom use, especially in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, and students may accept a well-produced film (even if it is older) more readily than an inexpensively produced educational film. This booklet discusses how animated films, narrative feature films, documentaries, and personal films might be used for teaching, and offers many specific films as examples. Separate chapters are devoted to film selection, presentation of a film to students, and where to obtain films. The author advocates the teaching of film as a form of literature (such as art or drama) by integrating film studies into the required curriculum in the junior and senior high schools. (JAB)

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Teaching With Film

By Hart Wegner

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Encountering the 'Film Generation'

Concerned observers of education have noted a progressive deterioration in the reading and writing skills of American students during the last decade. Some critics have blamed this atrophy of literacy skills on the students' dependence upon film and television. Unable to spell or to write a simple coherent sentence, students slump in front of a television set or flock to the movies. Motion picture studios and the television networks have been blamed for the creation of this passive mass audience.

But is film really to blame for deficiencies in writing and reading skills? Contributory factors may well include a combination of population shifts, school overcrowding, school violence, absenteeism, an overall decline in professionalism in teaching, and a general degeneration of crafts and skills in our society.

Even visual education methods are attacked by outside critics. Many teachers are alarmed by the incursions of film and television into their classrooms and often effectively resist the organized development of visual skills. The current attempt to return to educational basics, however, should not exclude film education in the increasingly visual world of the twentieth century.

Using film in the classroom may appear to some traditionalists as opening the gates even wider to a Trojan horse, preparing the way for an attack of illiteracy. But the fact is that teaching through film may not greatly change TV viewing habits in the student's home, just as emphasis on reading is not likely to change patterns of movie attendance. The important point is this: What is being seen can be integrated into the general process of learning.

Is it possible that our students see too much and read too little? Any instructor who refers to specific narrative feature films in the

classroom and expects instant recognition will meet blank stares when he mentions Ford, Kubrick, or Bergman. He* soon realizes that students are not seeing too much, but too little; and what they see is often not understood.

Our students have been denied the visual training that would enable them to cope intelligently with an increasingly visual environment. The need to offer visual instruction has not appeared urgent to many educators, because it was assumed that we were teaching the "film generation," a misnomer popularized in the 1960s. The misnomer served as justification for the exclusion of visual literacy from our educational goals.

If the written form of literature must be taught through a succession of grades, then it seems rather incongruous that film—a far more complex amalgam of literature, art, music, drama, architecture, and a variety of technical arts and crafts—should be considered "self-teaching."

During the period of the silent film it was assumed that film was *the* universal language, because people with many different language backgrounds could understand certain images and symbols; however, even a universal language has to be learned and should be taught. Film should not be pitted against literature, but should be integrated into the curriculum as one art among other arts.

When D. W. Griffith developed the conventions of narrative film, he used novelistic techniques as models, particularly the techniques of Victorian novelists such as Dickens. It never occurred to Griffith that he might be killing literature. He firmly believed that he was adding a new way of literary story telling. He saw film as another advance in the history of human communication, a step less traumatic than the change from the oral tradition to the written forms of literature.

Film is the most influential art form developed since the advent of literature. It is not an enemy of literature but an integral part in the ever-changing literary communication. What the written text was to the highly developed oral tradition, film has become to the printed text. One stage evolves into the other, and it would be naive to be-

*For clarity and economy, we use the masculine form of pronouns throughout this fastback when no specific gender is implied. While we recognize the trend away from this practice, we see no graceful alternative. We hope the reader will impute no sexist motives; certainly no sexism is intended. —*The Editors*

lieve that film is the final advance of literary evolution in the history of mankind. Having developed as a consistently popular medium from printed literature more than three-quarters of a century ago, film has not destroyed its matrix, as is evidenced by an annual publication of more than 40,000 books in the United States.

Literature and film can coexist in a manner similar to television and radio, radio and the legitimate stage, or television and the legitimate stage. The advent of television did not destroy radio, but redefined the role the radio was to play in our lives. Radio did not destroy the legitimate stage, nor did film; instead, the theater changed. Film does not threaten literature and literacy, because it *is* literature; and it has emerged as a dominant art form in our century. Film has remained an educational stepchild, however, used and abused in the classroom, when it should be treated with the same love and respect as the older children in the family of arts and disciplines.

Using Film in the Classroom

One of the major forces in the development of film, D. W. Griffith believed that film could be used to teach many different subjects and teach them much better than before. Griffith obviously was right, if we dare to admit it. We can bring the best instructors, scientists, and poets into our classrooms; and even the remotest community school can now become part of the whole world in an unprecedented way—if we use film intelligently.

If film can teach so well, why is it the one medium of instruction least used to its potential? Are we, the instructors, apprehensive about being replaced by disembodied images on the screen hypnotizing "our" students?

Film is the most influential and seductive force available to us to teach, to convince, and to transmit ideas and information—or simply to show the world as it is. Audiences respond more emotionally and react more violently to film than do readers to books. Authoritarian governments find that they must control the film industry. Lenin recognized this fact when he claimed that film was the most important art form of the Marxist revolution. With good reason, the issue of violence in film and television has been debated for years, while scant attention is paid to violence in books. *Triumph of the Will*, Leni Riefenstahl's propaganda masterpiece celebrating the rise of Nazism, was banned in the U.S. during World War II and for many years afterward, and yet Hitler's *Mein Kampf* remained in print as merely a work of curiosity value.

If film has such potential, it is distressing to see how poorly used it is in instruction and the extent to which students are unfamiliar with its history, aesthetics, and techniques. We are continuously surrounded by the effects of film (and its offspring, television), and yet

in most instances we have failed to teach our students what film is and what it is capable of achieving in its moments of greatness. Not only has the study of film been neglected, but the use of film in the instruction of other subjects has failed to make use of its full authoritative power.

Why has film so far failed to produce the educational revolution D. W. Griffith predicted? Many reasons could be cited. The cost factor at a time of rising rental charges is certainly a considerable problem. The reluctance or inability of the teacher to deal with the mechanical aspects of film projection is another. Also, a vague fear of the rivalry of the "automated instructor" may well constitute the most powerful resistance to the intelligent use of film in the classroom.

The Failure of Educational Film

Films made for the classroom often have not been successful in achieving the purpose for which they were produced: to instruct and to transmit specific information. These films are watched with boredom; minds almost audibly shut against their attempt to teach. Students detect the educational film almost immediately, for it is usually characterized by heavy-handed didactics and a notable lack of production values. Having spent thousands of days exposed to the most enticing and intensely produced visual experience, the television commercial, the student possesses an intuitive sense of production values. By necessity, educational films are often inexpensively produced. Therefore, they are often clumsy and off-putting. No wonder students reject them. Griffith correctly saw film as an educational tool as long as it did not lose "its powers as a medium of entertainment."

The quality of classroom films is usually not on the same level as the professional visual product available on television and in theaters. Production values—such as lighting, camera work, set and title design, costuming and sound—are obviously inferior to those in commercials, where the cost of filming a 30-second spot exceeds the total cost of an entire 30-minute educational film. Students, used to the attention-holding impact of contemporary images, fast-paced cutting and montage editing, a mixture of live action and animation techniques, and eye-appealing graphics, are simply bored. The problem is not so much with content as with format and design.

There are exceptions to this situation, and one need only pick up the catalogue of the National Film Board of Canada to see that it is possible to produce creative films for the classroom.

Since it is not likely that the market situation will allow for big-budget educational film production, other avenues to visual presentations in the classroom need to be explored. One answer is the use of commercially prepared film material: theatrical feature-length films and films made for television.

Narrative Feature Films

The study of feature films aids almost all of the disciplines in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The tradition of the feature-length film, usually with a running time of 90 minutes or more, became established by D. W. Griffith when in 1911 he adapted Tennyson's narrative poem "Enoch Arden" to the screen. Until this two-reel film became a success, it was thought that the attention span of an audience would be overburdened by material lasting more than 35 minutes. After this major step Griffith escalated the length of his films rapidly, creating the super-spectacles *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916). Each of these films had a projection time of over three hours.

A division of the rather unwieldy concept of the narrative feature film into subgroups is helpful for the understanding of the nature of film, as well as for instructional purposes. A discussion of these subgroups and many of the films contained in them may be found in a supplement at the end of this text.

Feature films made for theatrical release or for television exemplify the professional production quality students routinely expect from a visual product. These films maintain the students' attention and aid the instructor in achieving instructional goals.

In spite of the time conflict between film length and the limitation of the instructional hour, feature films can be shown in the classroom. It is possible to use the block schedule, just as is done for science labs, auto and wood shops, and some art classes. Another possibility is to project the film in segments on successive days. Dividing a film does not provide the ultimate viewing experience, but it usually does not seriously harm the film for the classroom. Indeed, it of-

fers an opportunity for students to "digest" the material, which in turn may heighten anticipation for the next installment. If the film is being rented, however, it is necessary to contract for serialized showing rights. It is better to include segmented major feature films in the curriculum than to choose short films produced for the classroom simply because of the more convenient format. To exclude the feature film from visual education is very much like trying to teach literature without including full-length plays and novels.

The Animated Film

Unless it is an educational film, an animated film is all too often excluded from classroom use because "cartoons" have been thought of only as entertainment and devoid of educational merit.

The animation process is as old or even older than live-action filming. One of its antecedents, the "flip-book," is based on the same principle as contemporary animated films. An artist draws a series of slightly different figures that, when seen in rapid succession, provide the illusion of motion. The Zoetrope, with its hand-drawn paper strips, also utilized this principle. In the early 1900s cartoonists were at work in a number of countries producing animated films as part of national film industries.

Silent animation was certainly a viable art, but only the coming of sound provided it with its major advances. In 1928 Walt Disney released *Steamboat Willy*, the first Mickey Mouse film and the first animated film with a sound track. It established the rhythmic unity of the timing of drawing and of music. Disney's *Flowers and Trees* (1933) was the first full technicolor film ever made, predating its use in live action (Rouben Mamoulian: *Becky Sharp*) by two years.

The Hollywood cartoon flowered from the coming of sound through the 1950s under such animation artists as Disney, Chuck Jones, Bob Clampett, Walter Lantz, Tex Avery, Bill Hanna, and Joe Barbera, who created many of the characters in the mythic American pantheon: Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny, Woody Woodpecker, Pepe le Pew, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, and the starcrossed Roadrunner and Coyote.

The demise of this world of Aesopian animal fables came in the 1950s under the onslaught of television. In an era of automation, the

fully animated film has become as rare as anything that is hand-crafted. In the early days, 24 frames per second were filled with painted backgrounds and characters drawn in varying positions of movement. Even when the number of drawings was reduced by half—the human eye does not really need animated movements faster than one-twelfth of a second to maintain the illusion of motion—more than 5,000 drawings were needed to create a fully animated seven-minute cartoon.

Animation made for Saturday morning television does not represent full animation and is not much more than "illustrated radio," relying on the sound track to tell the story and providing very few drawings to satisfy the visual sense of the young audience.

A few of the inventive directors of the studio era still create full animation, but their work is usually commissioned by television to provide an occasional TV special. For example, Chuck Jones, the originator of Roadrunner and his eternal nemesis, the Coyote, produced *The Cricket in Times Square* and its sequels for TV. He also directed the animation in the 26-minute television format of the Rudyard Kipling *Jungle Books* stories, e.g., *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, The White Seal,* and *Mowgli and His Brothers.*

Animation offers the freest form of film-making by advancing boldly into areas where live action film cannot go. The versatility of animation techniques ranges from a magnificently drawn and directed seven-minute spoof on Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung (What's Opera, Doc?)* to ideological statements such as Jiri Trnka's *The Hand.* The latter film illustrates more impressively than lengthy documentaries how the artist fares in a totalitarian society. With only a mournful-looking puppet, a flower pot, and a human hand as tools, this 19-minute silent film makes a very eloquent statement on freedom. Geometric designs become fun in Chuck Jones's Academy Award winning *The Dot and the Line,* and the political allegory of George Orwell is animated by Halas and Batchelor in *The Animal Farm.* But above all, animation opens unlimited access to fantasy, as was evident from the very beginning of this art. In the early 1920s Lotte Reininger spent three years creating a full-length animated film by cutting out more than 80,000 stylized silhouettes and hand-tinting each frame. A fairy-tale land unfolded, engaging the imagination of audiences of all ages long before live action films were able to do so.

Chuck Braverman's process called kinestasis falls somewhere between animation and the documentary. His films are photographed with an animation camera, but they are not based on drawings. This young director designs a rapid-fire succession of images, usually a montage of historic and contemporary paintings and news photos. His works include a three-minute history of the United States, *An American Time Capsule*, and a jarring examination of the 1960s done with a four-minute compression of vivid visuals in *Kinestasis 60*.

Animation films have much to offer in the classroom, if we can free ourselves of the prejudice that anything so amusing can not also be educational.

The Documentary

John Grierson, one of the most influential documentarists, defines documentaries as "all films made from natural materials." These nonfiction films derived from "natural materials" range from the journalistic, such as Lumière's brief account of the inauguration of McKinley in 1896, to the sensitively artistic, such as Arne Sucksdorff's somberly beautiful animal film *Shadows on the Snow*. Travelogues, films advocating a specific cause (Joris Ivens/Ernest Hemingway's *Spanish Earth)*, documentaries commissioned by government agencies (the Agricultural Adjustment Agency and Robert Flaherty's *The Land)* and industrial concerns (Standard Oil and Flaherty's *Louisiana Story)* are all part of this huge group.

The offerings range in length from feature films such as Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* and *Man of Aran*, Dziga-Vertov's *The Man With the Movie Camera*, and Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympiad* to a variety of shorter films easily accommodated into the standard classroom hour, like Pare Lorentz's *The River* (32 minutes) and *The Plow that Broke the Plain* (25 minutes), Flaherty's *The Land* (42 minutes), and John Huston's war reportage, *The Battle of San Pietro* (30 minutes).

When selecting a "factual" film for the classroom, it is important to remember that a film-maker, like a writer, comments with his work. The commentary is frequently found in the selection and editing of the material included, and since a documentary presents the authority of an apparent reality, it makes objectivity on the part of the class difficult.

Documentaries take sides and in their extreme form become powerful weapons of psychological warfare, such as Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* or Capra's *Why We Fight* series. It is essential for the instructor to balance the documentary's concern or bias with

a representation of the opposing point of view, either on film, tape, or by lecture. The film-maker may try to be merely a "camera eye"; but more often through his photographed images and sequences, he becomes an eloquent advocate, representing on film either his own thoughts and feelings or those of an ideology.

"Factual film" is often reflective of the temper of the time of its production and is representative of the country of its origin, sometimes revealing an embarrassing insensitivity to concerns of human dignity, the environment, or race as they are perceived by the contemporary viewer. Martin and Osa Johnson's filmed record of one of their African journeys (*Congarillo*, 1932) betrays, in spite of their obvious love for the continent, patronizing attitudes toward Africans. Contemporary audiences may find this offensive.

An exposure to good documentary film is essential for a complete visual education. Documentary production techniques have influenced the way theatrical and television films are being made. They have created new narrative styles in the novel (Dos Passos's *The 42nd Parallel*) and a new dramatic genre, the documentary theater.

The Experimental and Personal Films

This heterogeneous category unites such seemingly disparate groups as the avant-garde, the surrealists, the American underground film, the abstractionists, etc. In short, it encompasses independent film-makers using film as a medium for personal statements.

Belonging in this group are Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dali's *Un Chien Andalou* with its eyeball-slitting shock shot; Jean Epstein's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, photographed largely in slow-motion and often with a wide-angle lens; and Bruce Baillie's *Castro Street*, the cinematic transformation of a grim industrial area into beautiful images of consciousness. The thoughtfully comic collages of Bruce Conner (*A Movie, Cosmic Ray*) from the American underground film of the 1950s are part of this, as are the meticulous frame-by-frame constructions of the Austrian film-maker Peter Kubelka, who worked five years on the 13-minute film *Our Trip to Africa*.

What characterizes many of the experimental films in this category is the relative closeness of their pictorial composition to painting and of their editing to the rhythmic elements of music rather than to literature, which for many years influenced the structure and the themes of the traditional narrative film.

Because of a basic honesty in matters of love and death in these films, the instructor must be aware of their content before showing them. (For that matter, it is *always* desirable for the instructor to preview films.)

Many of these films are not easy to understand, because they contain such density of images. To be fully appreciated, they should be shown more than once.

The Selection of Films

The selection of films is often swayed by the obvious relish with which students receive contemporary films. As one of my students candidly said, "I only like new films." It is easy to understand the combined appeal of popular actors, filmed in sound and color, as opposed to people "who dress funny" and appear in black and white and possibly even in silent films. It is also easier for students to identify with the more recent problems discussed in contemporary films.

Unfortunately, the more recently made films are expensive to rent and are frequently not on the same level of thoughtfulness and technical achievement as older films. Film histories and criticisms of older films supply the instructor with supporting material for introductions and discussions, while help is often missing when the instructor is confronted by a recent movie.

It does require more work by the instructor to select the classical film that fits the classroom need. It also calls for extra attention on the part of the class to overcome the alienation of a different time period, different forms of dress, technical gaps, a foreign culture, or the reading of subtitles. It also becomes necessary to explain ideological, national, and ethnic prejudices that may have prevailed at the time the film was made (the depiction of blacks in D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915). This should not deter the instructor from using these films if they fit into the scope of the course. It is difficult to find a better illustration of the rise of Nazism than Leni Riefenstahl's superbly crafted *Triumph of the Will*. The same is true of Eisenstein's *Strike* (1925) and Monicelli's *The Organizer* (1964) for labor problems.

Industrialization and mechanization were prophetically satirized in René Clair's *A nous la Liberté* (1931) and in Chaplin's *Modern*

Times (1936). The danger of irresponsible speculation and its effects on the lives of simple people was graphically depicted in the Biograph one-reeler, *A Corner in Wheat* (D. W. Griffith, 1912).

Film ordering involves the instructor in a crazy quilt of individual distributors often charging vastly varying rental fees for the same film. A directory helps to locate the distributor(s) who may have the desired title available. James L. Limbacher's *Feature Films on 8mm and 16mm: A Directory of Feature Films Available for Rental, Sale, and Lease in the United States* is often used.

The Presentation

There is obviously more to the full utilization of a film than threading the projector and checking the focus. An introduction detailing the conditions at the time of the film's creation helps immensely. For instance, it would help students to appreciate D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* if they knew the United States was readying itself to enter World War I when it was released. The historical situation depicted in the same film (France under Charles IX and Catherine de Medici and the slaughter of the Huguenots) is important for understanding the "Medieval French Story" theme. The reception of films presenting material not part of the student's immediate concern is particularly aided by factual explanations. A class responds measurably to points stressed and explained before the projection of a film.

Introductions are essential when dealing with filmed "history." Students gain insights through the combination of seeing *Birth of a Nation* and a detailed introduction to the causes of the Civil War and the Reconstruction period. The reception of all of Eisenstein's films gains greatly if the class is introduced to the basic facts of the succession of revolutions from 1905 to 1918 and to figures of the Russian past, such as Alexander Nevsky or Ivan the Terrible. Certain propagandistic levels can be recognized as indicative of sentiments in Soviet Russia during the 1930s or 1940s, and the films can be seen in their proper historical contexts. A concerted drive toward communal farming was the reason for the existence of *The General Line* (1929). The banning of both *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) and part II of *Ivan the Terrible* (circa 1948) are indicative of the fluctuations in official Soviet policy at the time of the German-USSR nonaggression pact at the height of Stalinist power.

In order to be effective, an introduction should also prepare stu-

dents for certain technical and stylistic devices used in a film. The development of deep-focus cinematography by Gregg Toland in *Citizen Kane* and the preponderance of low-angle shots in photographing Orson Welles should be mentioned. A discussion may stress the aesthetic results of technological advances. One can discuss the function of deep-focus cinematography beyond its immediate purpose of expanding on-screen space. Students can be shown how Orson Welles contrasts foreground and background actions within the same shot, one action satirizing the other. A comparison to Eisenstein's montage may be fruitful.

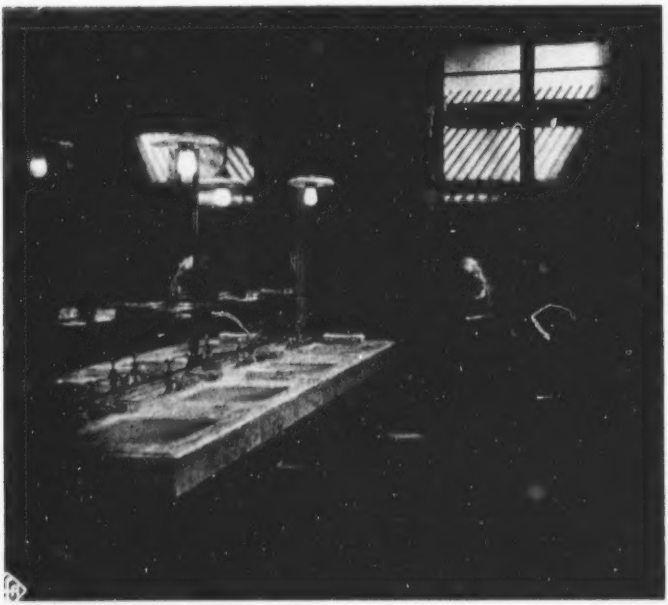
It is requisite for the study of film to move beyond a preoccupation with dialogue and its literary quality. There should be an examination of the variety of artistic and technical contributions to the production of the film under discussion. A moving visual (and literary) experience can be created without dialogue or narration, and the only way for students to participate in the film experience is to learn how to see.

In introducing Murnau's *The Last Laugh*, a number of points may be stressed to aid the class. The experience of viewing this more than 50-year-old silent foreign film can be a very affecting and enlightening part of the course. The students should be introduced to the team responsible for the innovations in this film: the director, F. W. Murnau *(Nosferatu, Faust, Sunrise Tabu)*; the screenwriter, Carl Mayer, responsible for many of the expressionist films of the period *(The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, The Haunted Castle, Tartuffe, Sunrise)*; and the cameraman, Karl Freund *(Metropolis, Variety, Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis)*, who worked closely with the director in creating the "liberated camera." The camera moves incessantly: down elevators, on bicycles, through walls; it even swings like a pendulum. Emil Jannings *(Variety, Faust, The Last Command, The Blue Angel)*, who evokes deep humanity in the role of the doorman, went on to receive the first Academy Award for best performance ever given. In each case the careers of the artists should be discussed, so that students can see how this film fits into a larger frame of reference.

The Last Laugh provides an example of a film to be studied on the basis of pure visuals, because its main body does not contain a single title card, and the story of the degradation of an aging man is told without a printed or spoken word. Questions for discussion might

The Last Laugh

deal with the problems of nonverbal communication through acting and photography in a film devoid of physical action. What are the implications of a film that centers on the hero's loss of his uniform? What does it say about the time and the place where it was produced (the Germany of the Weimar Republic)? The director, who also believed in the universality of film language, tried to create an international film, even using Esperanto on some of the signs visible in the background, although the theme is peculiarly German. *The Last Laugh* becomes a universal film through the tragedy of the fall of the liveried doorman from his prideful glory (often shot from low angles to stress the awe-inspiring bulk of the gold-braided greatcoat) to his downstairs existence as a men's room attendant (filmed in long shots angling down to reduce him pitifully in size commensurate with his diminished importance in the world).



The Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive, 21 W. 53rd St., New York City

The Last Laugh

In showing film it is ideal to have two projectors in a soundproofed facility, but most instructors will have to make do with one projector located in the classroom. Film should generally be shown in one sitting, thus acknowledging the importance of rhythm and timing as prime elements in the "motion" of moving pictures. Again, necessity may force the division of the film into several installments.

Film is one of the few arts that allows the maker to control the speed with which his work will be consumed. A reader of literature can proceed at his own pace, of course. He can reread difficult passages or linger over the lines of a poem. In film study it is preferable to reshow the whole film rather than use bits or slow down the projection speed (should such equipment be available). This procedure, however, is recommended for advanced studies in composition and structure. Excerpting scenes or sequences occasionally works to the advantage of the instructor, just as it does in literature studies with natural "units." (Dostoyevsky's "Grand Inquisitor" can be extracted from *The Brothers Karamazov* or Kafka's "Before the Law" can be taken from *The Trial.*)

Silence, please! As one of the public arts, the enjoyment of film depends to a large degree on the behavior of others in the audience. Noise destroys the concentration imposed on the audience by the hypnotic quality of projection in the dark. The emotional impact of a film is impaired by the distractions of conversation and other noise. If students are to learn how to see, we should give them all possible help in concentrating.

Students should be encouraged to take notes after each showing, so that they may be able to recall specific scenes, compositions, dialogue, and their own reactions. Some students may very profitably sketch composition elements on a story-board as a form of visual note taking. These notes become an essential step in forming critical abilities. After the showing the instructor should check to see how much his class has absorbed.

Film is one of the greatest discussion starters. The results of discussing a film immediately after its showing or on the next day differ considerably. An immediate discussion is bound to be more emotional, for the audience is unable to free itself from the impact of the film. More intellectual reflections, even with regard to films with strong emotional appeal, emerge in a delayed discussion.

To aid in the development of critical abilities, students in all

grades should prepare written or oral reports. This is important training in the organization of visual and verbal material.

It is vital for instructor and student alike to read about films. There is an unevenness of quality and reliability of film books—even in basic facts such as names, dates, and titles. Hence, the novice needs some guidance. After an initiation with a readable and reliable general history of film, such as Arthur Knight's *The Liveliest Art* (good up to the mid-1950s), he can branch out into areas of special interest. Readings on the development of film in a specific country, on aesthetics and theories of film, and on individual directors provide an understanding of the unique problems of film scholarship.

Just as essential as additional reading is supplementary viewing. Films by a director or from a period being studied may be seen on television, in art film and revival theaters, or in public libraries or film clubs. Students should be encouraged to see as many additional films as possible. Just as true literacy cannot be achieved by merely reading course assignments, one cannot become knowledgeable about films unless one views them as often and as objectively as possible.

Who Makes Films?

An essential part of teaching film is explaining and illustrating the various arts and crafts contributing to the pre-production and production stages of film-making. Film is a collective art form fusing literature, acting, photography, music, dance, architecture, and painting into one work; it is quite distinct from any of its component parts. Yet, we speak of a film's "author" as if we were interpreting a poem or a novel. Can a single person be responsible for something as complex as a film? The answer is yes and no, depending entirely upon the circumstances of the film's conception and production and on the amount of artistic control the director is able to exert.

The achievements of the cinematographer should be assessed. It is he who creates the only "reality" of the film, the photographic image captured by his camera work and the lighting of the set. From Billy Bitzer, who worked on most Griffith films, to Sven Nykvist, the director of photography for Bergman, many cinematographers have becomes stars in their own right; and such names come to mind as Gregg Toland, Arthur C. Miller, Leon Shamroy, James Wong Howe, and Stanley Cortez.

The scriptwriter's contribution may shape a director's films to a degree not often enough realized or acknowledged. Robert Riskin influenced Frank Capra's career over a period of three decades, including collaboration on such popular successes as *It Happened One Night, Mr. Deeds Goes to Town, Lost Horizon,* and *You Can't Take It With You.* As a matter of fact, all three of Capra's Academy Awards for best direction were given for films written by Robert Riskin. A similarly fruitful relationship existed between John Ford and the writers Dudley Nichols *(The Informer, Stagecoach, Hurricane, The Plough and the Stars)* and Frank S. Nugent *(Fort Apache, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, Wagonmaster, The Searchers).* Nichols and Nugent affected Ford's films so tellingly, especially the westerns, that one can easily tell which of these scriptwriters wrote which script.

The creative influence of actors on their films is quite obvious. This is especially true of such actors as Katharine Hepburn, although

credit should be given to George Cukor and his direction of Miss Hepburn in such films as *Little Women, Sylvia Scarlett, Holiday, The Philadelphia Story,* and a number of films in which she was teamed with Spencer Tracy. Having films written for an actor's perpetual screen *persona* does not constitute a creative influence on a film, as became evident in the many films in which Clark Gable appeared as Gable. Actor-dancer Fred Astaire, on the other hand, frequently created his own parts because the scripts would provide him with a succession of trite stories, with merely enough plot to support what Astaire had created for himself and his partner.

The editor often provides more than the cutting of the film. His contribution usually depends on how much authority the director surrenders, and yet it is the editor who creates the tempo so essential to a film. Editor Verna Fields travels to a film's location and advises the director during the actual shooting, as she did with *Jaws.* Incidently, she may have brought about much of the contemporary look of films, having worked closely with directors Peter Bogdanovich on *Paper Moon* and *Daisy Miller,* Steven Spielberg on *Sugarland Express* and *Jaws,* and George Lucas on *American Graffiti.*

Although he is infinitely more visible than the editor, the producer is often overlooked as a creative force. The career of David O. Selznick offers an example of the creative producer. His formative effort was especially evident in the production of *Gone With the Wind.* It was he who decided which scenes and characters of Margaret Mitchell's novel were to be used in the script. He cast the actors (disregarding the novelist's suggestion that Groucho Marx play Rhett Butler), oversaw the elaborate costuming, and ultimately became involved in the direction. He exerted more influence than any of the directors involved, including the credited director, Victor Fleming, and the uncredited directors, George Cukor and Sam Wood.

Producer Hal. B. Wallis's career may provide the link from the early gangster films, such as *Little Caesar* (1930), to later examples of the genre like *The Roaring Twenties* (1939), and finally to the *film noir* of the 1940s with his productions of *I Walk Alone, Invisible Stripes, They Drive by Night, High Sierra,* and *The Maltese Falcon.* This continuity of naturalistic American film through the 1930s and 1940s does not become visible if we concentrate our attention on the director as the sole creative force in film-making.

The work of the art director should also be discussed in class, for it is he who creates much of the visual appearance of a film by its architecture and set designs. During the studio era there was a distinctive look to UFA productions (city streets threatened with shadows upon shadows), just as the Warner Brothers' look had its newsreel type of documentary hardness. There was even an identifiable glossiness to the MGM productions. The contribution of the art director is of primary importance in films shot on studio sets where all of the "reality" has to be manufactured. The MGM look of lush perfection during the 1930s and 1940s can be traced largely to Cedric Gibbons, who designed hundreds of films and was awarded Academy Awards (he also designed the Oscar statuette) for such outstanding examples of his work as *The Bridge of San Luis Rey, Pride and Prejudice, Blossoms in the Dust, Gaslight, The Yearling, Little Women,* and *An American in Paris*—whose ballet sequence sets were inspired by paintings of the French impressionists.

The dilemma in teaching film appreciation is to stress both the often underrated production contributions of the various arts and crafts and the impressive stamp that individual directors gave to their films, even at the height of the studio collectives. This becomes evident when one studies the works of Orson Welles, George Cukor, Howard Hawks, Vincente Minnelli, etc. When one discusses the relationship of a director with his collaborators, the question arises: "Does the director's work change radically with the individual contributors?" Bergman's films remain much the same, even without Sven Nykvist. As a matter of fact, *The Seventh Seal* was not photographed by him. Capra's films express the same populist philosophy even without Riskin's scripts as evidenced by the fact that Riskin did not write Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.*

Jean Renoir's films did not deteriorate when he emigrated to the United States where he was forced to work without his ensemble of friends and relatives and was unable to write his own scripts as he had done in France.

A thoughtful balance should prevail when discussing the "authorship" of a film. Is film a collective art or the work of an individual? Only a close examination of each film will provide the answer.

Script and Film in Language and Literature Courses

The study of film in a language arts course is aided considerably by incorporating the film's script into the assigned reading. As the choice of the film depends largely on the level of instruction, so does the selection of the script, which may vary considerably in technical detail. A script may be an original work written for a specific film, as was the case when Herman J. Mankiewicz wrote *Citizen Kane*, or it may be based on a published work or an earlier film. Ford's *My Darling Clementine* is an illustration of the latter. Its script was written by Samuel Engle and Winston Miller from a "story" (actually a script written for Allan Dwan's *Frontier Marshal*) by Sam Hellman, who had based his work on a western novel by Stuart N. Lake.

A close reading of a script based on a novel, play, or short story illuminates not only the process of adaptation but also provides insights into the inner workings of film and literature. Occasionally a writer of great merit very sensitively adapts another writer's work, the case in Aldous Huxley's treatment of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (Robert Z. Leonard, 1940). An examination of Carol Reed's *The Third Man* and its literary origins offers the possibility of comparing this film with Graham Greene's script and his novel with the same title.

Another way of incorporating a film script into a literature course is to select a novelist who is also a screen writer (Nathanael West, F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, James M. Cain, Aldous Huxley, etc.) and make his film script part of the assigned reading. One example is John Steinbeck's original script for Elia Kazan's *Viva Zapata!* Staying with Steinbeck, one can also use one of his novels, such as *Grapes of Wrath*, and compare the film version directly (John Ford, 1940) with the novel without taking recourse to Nunnally Johnson's

script. This particular comparative study of film and novel is aided by the cinematic nature of Steinbeck's writing, which, according to Edmund Wilson, was possibly influenced by Pare Lorentz's documentary films. At times the process of connecting print literature to film literature involves additional levels, as is the case with John Ford's *Stagecoach*. Dudley Nichols's script is a screen adaptation of a *Saturday Evening Post* story, Ernest Haycox's "Stage to Lordsburg," which in turn is based on Guy de Maupassant's tale "Ball of Fat."

The quality and make-up of published scripts varies considerably, ranging from a simple listing of the dialogue to a complete reconstruction of the film with detailed instructions for camera and actor movements. Some script publications are without illustrations, while others contain as many as 1,500 individual frame blow-ups with the dialogue or narration.

Analyzing a film by making copies of the script available to the class insures a greater amount of accuracy, an element all too frequently missing from film studies. The students can comprehend the structure of a film more easily if they read a script and become aware of the length of the scenes, the editing involved, the camera angles and movements, and the other production factors. Working with both a script and a film also permits more pertinent verbal and visual quotes.

In teaching a second language, one can use films and scripts to great advantage. Foreign language feature films provide the student with a naturally spoken language, without slowdowns or the artificially distinct pronunciation so frequently found in the pedagogic language films. The film script may be used as an advanced reader. Some scripts have been edited and published as readers, complete with vocabularies and exercises. The film's soundtrack can be segmented into individual oral comprehension exercises and made available in the language laboratory or the classroom. Students can also be "cast" as actors in the film. Watching the action on the screen while the soundtrack is switched off, they can substitute their own voices.

Beyond the purely pedagogic utilization of the film in language courses, the value of carefully chosen films in culture and civilization courses is quite obvious. The use of film in language instruction is limited only by the instructor's imagination.

Teaching Film

From its almost simultaneous beginnings in various countries, film as an art has a history of some 80 years, and only half a century has passed since the incorporation of sound. What it lacks in length, film history has made up through rapid technical advances, experimentation, and innovations in the development of narrative techniques. Thousands of important titles are crowded into these eight decades.

Quite naturally, film history taught in our schools concentrates on the development of the American film; yet from the beginning the form and content of our films were profoundly determined by influences from other countries. The first contingent of European directors (Curtiz, Lubitsch, Murnau, Seastrom) was hired by Hollywood in the 1920s after they achieved preeminence in their own countries. They were followed in the 1930s and 1940s by those fleeing from Nazism and the war (Lang, Renoir, Siodmak).

After 1945, international movements and the work of foreign directors continued to influence American films: Italy, through the neo-realism of the late 1940s (*Open City, Shoeshine, Bicycle Thief*) and later with the films of Antonioni and Fellini; France, through the New Wave directors, particularly Godard and Truffaut; Sweden, almost solely represented by Ingmar Bergman; and Japan, through Akira Kurosawa, several of whose films were remade in the United States.

Instead of following the linear history of film through its technical innovations and their effects on form and content (montage, sound, deep focus, lightweight cameras, faster film stock, etc.), one may concentrate on the major directors who exerted such control over their material and its filming that each film became a personal statement and an identifiable part of their lifetime work.

Many of the directors one can select for such a unit of instruction have created films that can be appreciated by most age groups. Jean Renoir, a major *auteur*, illustrated in his *Grand Illusion* the basic human desire for freedom. The film will be understood more fully by students at higher levels of intellectual development, but it can be comprehended by young audiences. The struggle for survival of a rural family in Renoir's *The Southerner* deals with a basic human problem and cuts across the lines of national, ethnic, and social self-interest.

Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thief* is particularly suitable for lower grades because the point of view of Bruno, the boy who accompanies his father searching for the bicycle needed for the family's survival, is incorporated into the narrative structure of the film, and this encourages identification and involvement on the part of young viewers. Director Frank Capra showed his *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* in elementary school classes, and he was surprised at the discussions and comments on politics and government it generated among 8- and 9-year-olds.

In the past it was customary to take older children to the theater, not to see children's plays but to see Shakespeare, Schiller, and Shaw. Today it is possible to expose younger students to serious film, if it becomes part of an organized and continuous effort.

The Future of Film Studies

Film studies do not exist in a vacuum but function in a series of contexts linking them to the social, political, and cultural situations in a country. To be successful they have to occupy a specific position within the national educational structure, and they are related to the film culture in the country where they are taught.

In European countries a general national policy governs the study of film. Even if agencies on the provincial (state) level and individual schools formulate policy and provide impetus, they rarely deviate from the national norms. The emphasis most West European countries place on film and television education is not yet strongly evident in American secondary education, although film studies flourish at American universities.

It is difficult to understand why the country that created the world's most influential films and television productions fails to include film education prominently among its educational goals.

The future of film studies depends on its integration into American secondary education:

1. Students in both junior high schools and high schools should receive a visual education, and this should be a requirement—just as it is with other essential subjects.

2. Film studies should be taught as a separate discipline, not as part of mass media instruction.

3. In order to provide consistent visual education, it is necessary to utilize the resources of state and national organizations and agencies. Special programs like those for gifted children or occasional efforts by individual school districts are not enough.

4. Teachers need to be trained in film education. All too often schools of education merely provide basic instruction in the hand-

ling of audiovisual equipment. Teaching film is not just an additional assignment to be given the language arts teacher.

5. Departments of education in each state should establish guidelines for individual school districts. They should supply statewide coordination by conducting periodic conferences concerned with updating rapidly changing information and with discussing developments in film education techniques.

6. Professional film education should be able to draw on a national library of "standard editions" of basic films. Many of the classic films are now in the public domain and can be utilized for such a project. Films available now may vary greatly in quality and, most importantly, in length. Since the scripts of most major American films have not been published, instructors and students are left to guess the extent of the work to be studied.

7. School libraries or resource centers need to make available basic film reference works and texts, because film studies, more than any other discipline, have been plagued with vagueness and a lack of concern with such basic bibliographic requirements as the correctness of dates, names, and titles.

8. It is important to realize that the use of film is not the study of film. It is this realization that will start the development of film studies as a properly researched and professionally taught discipline in American schools.

Supplement
Teaching with Narrative Feature Films

Narrative feature films can be divided by genres, themes, national origin, and historical periods.

Isolating a certain genre can create interesting course or instructional unit possibilities. A concentration on genre film opens up the possibility of the study of the gangster film and its reflection of society with such examples as Howard Hawks's *Scarface*, Mervyn LeRoy's *Little Caesar*, William Wellman's *Public Enemy*, or Raoul Walsh's *Roaring Twenties*. Grouping the horror films facilitates the

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A Trip to the Moon

study of such psychological archetypes as F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu*, Tod Browning's *Dracula*, James Whale's *Frankenstein*, or Jacques Tourneur's *The Cat People*. Science fiction film ranges from the one-reel 1902 production of magician Méliès *A Trip to the Moon* (complete with mid-oceanic splashdown) to the futuristic feature films with an often apocalyptic touch (Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Byron Haskin's *War of the Worlds*, Rudolph Maté's *When Worlds Collide*, or William Cameron Menzies's *Things To Come*).

The rise and decline of the screen musical is crowded into two decades, originating in full force with the coming of sound and waning under the impact of television in the mid-1950s. Harry Beaumont's *Broadway Melody*, Lloyd Bacon's *Footlight Parade*, Mark Sandrich's *Top Hat*, Vincente Minnelli's *An American in Paris*, and Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly's *On the Town* and *Singin' in the Rain* are all examples of different treatments of the mixture of fantasy and realism that constitutes the musical.

A grimly naturalistic movement, which gained its greatest visibility in the 1940s, is the *film noir*. It includes such well-known variations of the "city and night" theme as John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* and *Asphalt Jungle*, Tay Garnett's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, Otto Preminger's *Laura* and *Fallen Angel*, or Fritz Lang's *The Big Heat*.

One of the largest subgroups that is most fruitful for the study and discussion of the merging sociological, historical, literary, and psychological influences is the American western. Prime examples are films by John Ford (*The Iron Horse*, *Stagecoach*, *My Darling Clementine*, *Fort Apache*, *The Searchers*, etc.), Howard Hawks (*Red River*, *Rio Bravo*), Anthony Mann (*The Naked Spur*, *The Man from Laramie*), Budd Boetticher (*Buchanan Rides Alone*), Henry King (*The Gunfighter*), or Sam Peckinpah's autumnal western *Ride the High Country*.

Screen comedy existed from the very first sketches acted out for the cameras of Lumière and Edison; and it was created in abundance, ranging from the pantomime of Chaplin, Keaton, and later Jacques Tati to the verbal fireworks of screwball comedy of such directors as Howard Hawks (*Twentieth Century*), Frank Capra (*It Happened One Night*), Preston Sturges (*Palm Beach Story*), or Leo McCarey (*The Awful Truth*).

The enthusiastic reception of film comedy in the classroom

should make this a genre of special interest to the instructor, who can freely use the comedy potential for social criticism, political satire, psychological insights, or for spoofs of other serious genres in literature and film.

While it may be relatively easy to separate comedy from other films, it is not at all easy to find a sufficiently large group of screen tragedies. Possibly the Danish director Carl Theodor Dreyer was correct when he pointed out that a tragic poet of the cinema has not yet appeared.

Should the instructor choose to divide the material into historical periods, an examination of the films of the 1930s, for example, would reveal an interrelation of economic conditions and the film industry. The 1940s show the effect of war on films and the reaction society had to war films. The 1950s offer various examples of the effect internal political investigations had on Hollywood films.

The same approach can be applied to the international cinema by concentrating on the emerging Russian film of the 1920s, the German expressionist film of the same decade, the Italian neo-realist film of the 1940s (from Visconti's *Ossessione* in 1942 to De Sica's *Umberto D.* in 1951), or the French film of the 1960s. The latter began with the emergence of the New Wave, Godard's *Breathless* and Truffaut's *400 Blows* in 1959.

When teaching the histories of national cinemas, film can be employed in different ways. A course or unit on the Soviet cinema explores the Russian revolution in its historical, political, and social repercussions. The discussions can be based on the showings of Eisenstein's *Ten Days That Shook the World*, Dovzhenko's *Arsenal*, or Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg*. Parallel to this, using films from the same period (Eisenstein's *Potemkin* and Pudovkin's *Mother*), the development of one of the basic narrative techniques of film production can be explained. This is montage editing, a technique still in use today.

While focusing on the 1920s, the Golden Age of the German cinema, many films recommend themselves: Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, Fritz Lang's *Destiny*, *Metropolis*, or his *Nibelung* films, Paul Wegener's *The Golem*, F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu*, and Josef von Sternberg's *The Blue Angel*. The German film of the expressionist period was highly literary, and examinations of the influence of the theater on film are particularly rewarding. Besides a

great emphasis on the relationship of film to literature, this period also offers advances in camera technique, such as the liberation of the motion picture camera from a fixed position (*The Last Laugh*, 1924).

While film may not be the universal language that D. W. Griffith and many after him claimed it was, foreign language films should not be excluded from classroom use, unless the students cannot yet read subtitles. International films expand the classroom experience to an unprecedented degree, letting students see and sense the quality of life in another place and at another time.

The thematic approach can best be explained with an example. A unit on "war" using international films can be used to show the effects of armed conflicts and aggression. The selection of films again depends on the financial resources and on the age and the degree of sophistication of the students. The number of films dealing in one form or another with war is enormous, and a film selected from this

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All Quiet on the Western Front

group should not only reflect the physical reality of war but also its psychological effects on the human beings involved.

One of the most stirring films on war was Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), which is still, after several wars, one of the most enduring portrayals of the young soldier growing up (and old) under fire. René Clement's *Forbidden Games* (1952) shows the horrifying effect of war on children, while in *The Bridge* (1960) Bernhard Wicki examines the pointless heroism of several teenagers drafted in the waning days of the war. American attitudes toward war can be gauged by several examples taken from different periods. The gearing up for the U.S. entry into World War II can be seen in the anti-German stance of William Wyler's *Mrs. Miniver* (1942). The cost of lives and damaged nerves was assessed after the war in Henry King's *Twelve O'clock High* (1949), although John Ford's *They Were Expendable* (1945) had already drawn a melancholy portrayal of heroism in war.

The problems of communication between soldiers and civilians had been treated by Lewis Milestone, and this theme was updated by Wyler in *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946). This film also directed

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Grand Illusion

attention of the public to the problem of the disabled veteran's re-entry into civilian life.

Samuel Fuller reflected the re-arming of America for a new war and a different foe in his Korean War films *Steelhelmet* and *Fixed Bayonets* (both released in 1951). The idealism of the American soldiers had faded, and they are depicted as more pragmatic than their counterparts of World War II, aiming for survival more than anything else.

In Stanley Kubrick's *Paths of Glory* (1957), the Moloch War devours its human sacrifices and provides frightening images of trench warfare. Grigori Chukhrai's *Ballad of a Soldier* (1960) and Mikail Kalatozov's *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957) tell in human terms of the impact war had on simple Russian people.

An individual soldier who steps out of the killing mechanism of war and atones is sensitively portrayed by Kon Ichikawa in the Japanese film *The Burmese Harp* (1956). The humanity of its director makes Jean Renoir's *Grand Illusion* (1937) the one film indispensable in this unit on war. Renoir transcends national boundaries and political ideologies in this examination of why men go to war and fight.

The showings of narrative feature films can readily be strengthened with short films such as Robert Enrico's *Chickamauga* or Dennis and Terry Sanders's *A Time Out of War*, which like the Enrico films deals with the Civil War. Documentaries can also be utilized. John Huston's *Battle of San Pietro* gives an insight into the daily small battles not publicized by headlines and medals.